



# NATIONAL GRANGE

OF THE ORDER OF PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY

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May 8, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

**RE: WC Docket No. 17-108: Restoring Internet Freedom**

Dear Chairman Pai,

We write to you in support of your recent action to end government overregulation of the internet.

For the last several years, the National Grange has been a vocal supporter of the open internet principles that find ways to increase both innovation and investment. High-speed mobile applications and broadband services are playing an increasingly vital role in agriculture, telebusiness, telemedicine and distance learning. Families, schools and businesses in rural areas are beginning to experience the significant and measurable benefits that come with this access.

Yet, rural Americans are among the most under-served consumers of high-speed broadband. The National Grange has long advocated that facts and evidence should guide the government's decision-making process on any matter and we would like to thank you for making that a priority of your Chairmanship.

Last week, I delivered remarks in support of the new proceeding on Net Neutrality and I'd like to submit my testimony to the record in support of your action on the topic. I would also like to submit a piece I authored in Morning Consult discussing the implications of an Open Internet without Title II style regulations on rural and small town America.

We plan to stay close to the highly controversial issue of the Open Internet and strongly advocate for state-of-the-art access for small towns, rural communities and other under-served areas.

Sincerely,

Betsy E. Huber  
National Grange

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## **STATEMENT OF NATIONAL GRANGE PRESIDENT BETSY HUBER ON CHAIRMAN PAI'S NET NEUTRALITY ROADMAP**

Betsy Huber, President of the National Grange, delivered remarks alongside Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai at a forum on the future of regulation hosted by FreedomWorks and the SBE Council:

“I am honored to stand alongside Chairman Pai, FreedomWorks, and the Small Business Entrepreneurship Council to talk about the importance of connectivity to our rural communities. For 150 years, the National Grange has worked to ensure that all communities are able to benefit from the latest advancements in communications technologies and gain access to them.

Today, that's why we are committed to ensuring an open Internet to connect all entrepreneurs from the Silicon Valley to the Silicon Prairie. We look forward to working with the Chairman on his efforts to spur inclusive innovation that connects all of America's citizens, including those in our rural and small town communities.”

*Betsy Huber is the president of National Grange (@NationalGrange), an organization that strives to provide opportunities for individuals and families to develop to their highest potential to build stronger communities and states as well as a stronger nation. She is also a member of the FCC's Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee.*



## THE FCC’S STEP FORWARD FOR RURAL INTERNET SERVICE

Morning Consult | [Betsy Huber](#) | May 5, 2017 | 05:00 AM

When the Federal Communications Commission made its decision two years ago to regulate the internet as a public utility, the [harm](#) came to small towns and rural communities almost immediately. Internet companies nationwide slowed or stopped plans to invest in improving and expanding their services due to new legal and compliance costs.

For rural America, those regulations presented yet another hurdle to gaining access to modern broadband services that urban areas have enjoyed for years.

Last week, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai [announced his plan](#) to correct that mistake. His plan stresses deployment of new broadband service by doing away with the outdated rules adopted two years ago – rules that were adapted from Title II of a 1934 law that Congress and Franklin Roosevelt’s administration authored to help govern the rotary phone system.

Pai’s plan has sparked an unusual amount of handwringing by some people with misguided ideas on how to ensure the internet economy continues to thrive.

For example, in The New York Times last week, law professor Tim Wu called Pai’s announcement “senseless government action.” But it’s not senseless when rural businesses and internet users are suffering from the rules implemented two years ago.

Just last week, almost two dozen small internet providers, primarily from rural communities, spoke out on the harm these rules have done to internet service in small towns and rural communities. The places in which they’re based include Rhinelander, Wis.; Gaylord, Minn.; West Bend, Iowa; and Chaparral, N.M.

“For our customers, the rules have been all cost and no benefit,” they wrote. “Each of us has spent substantial time and resources, including for advice from outside consultants and lawyers, to ensure that our practices are consistent with the rules.”

Most important, these internet providers explained, “each of us has slowed, if not halted, the development and deployment of innovative new offerings.”

Wu and anyone else claiming not to see any problems with regulating the internet like a public utility must accept that for many communities, the result has been higher costs, slower access and poorer service.

But what makes his comments and others like them so much worse is that the harm from the FCC’s action [has been apparent](#) for years. A rural internet provider in Southwest Virginia

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reported within three months of the new rules that it had to stop investing in new rural broadband service because of the FCC's decision and the new legal fees.

An internet provider called Aristotle that serves rural Arkansas had plans to triple its customer base by deploying a fixed wireless network across a three-county area. But as its president [told Congress](#) a year ago, the company was forced to slash that plan because of the risks of the FCC's Title II rules and the expense of complying with those rules.

The internet is continuously evolving and becoming more and more essential for people to thrive in today's modern world. Applying outdated Title II regulations to internet providers will bog down the process of bringing new technologies to consumers, especially in rural and underserved areas. Without access to the same high quality broadband services that are available to urban residents, our rural communities will be at a disadvantage for economic growth, jobs and education.

Pai deserves credit for moving quickly to roll back the FCC's Title II mistake that has inflicted so much harm on rural communities.

*Betsy Huber is president of National Grange.*

<https://morningconsult.com/opinions/fccs-step-forward-rural-internet-service/>